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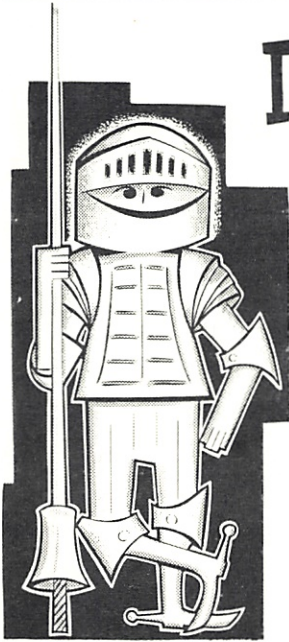
December 1977 *The Magazine of Maine's Hills & Lakes Region* Vol. I, No. 2

Christmas Traditions  
Hebron's Ned Willard: An Interview



"Christmas with the Milletts" (Fiction)  
O, Christmas Tree: Two Local Growers





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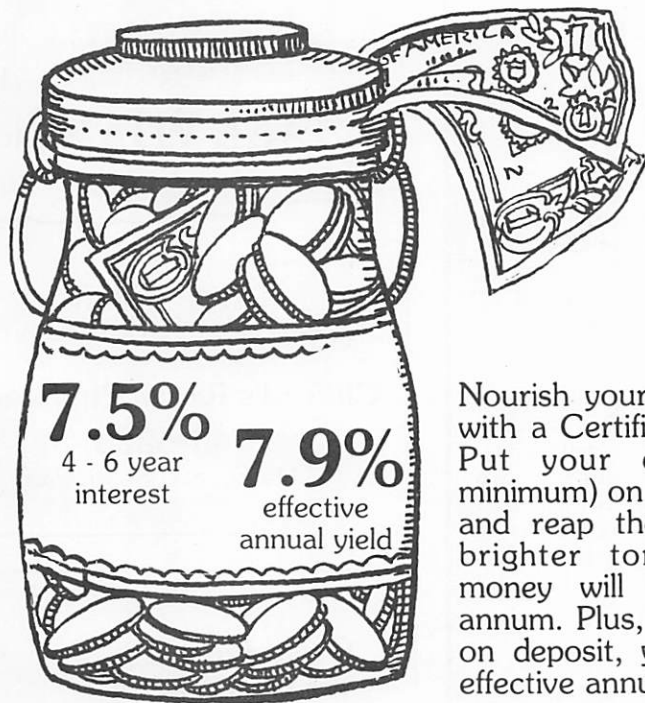


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# BitterSweet

## Notes:

### Here To Stay

Although the final results won't be in until we make the rounds of the newsstands with this month's magazine and tally sales of our first issue, all signs point to a propitious beginning for **BitterSweet**. Several stores were sold out of their first crop of copies within hours after the magazine arrived at the stands. There are now three thousand copies in circulation and they've been gathering their fair share of favorable comment and critique.

We're particularly pleased about the amount of material which has been flooding our mails — poetry and short stories, articles and art work submitted by residents from around the county. Some of the submissions — like Pat White Gorrie's portrayal of her egg lady friend Lottie Record, Kathy Zarcone's piece on Christmas traditions, Kevin Hamilton's description of Christmas tree cutting in Bridgton, Cathy Flynn's visit with two local tree growers, and John Garnham's bizarre tale of Christmas at the home of a — hopefully fictitious — local family are part of this December offering. More will follow next month.

The truth is, we're delighted with the **BitterSweet** reaction. Although we realize there's a lot of ground to cover in the months ahead, we think we've set out in the right direction. And, as we hoped when we first conceived of this junket, you readers are apparently willing to help keep us on the right path.

Woody Allen of South Paris, whose crisp dollar bill now graces our office wall — the first payment received for a magazine fresh off the presses a month ago — may have put it best when he predicted, "You'll be around for a long time."

We're looking forward to that — and hope you share our enthusiasm.

### The Cover

This month's cover is taken from a primitive painting entitled "*Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine*," done around 1870 by an unknown artist. It is part of a scene, believed to depict an old meeting house once standing in Norway Center, which decorated the nation's Christmas Stamp in 1969.

The original painting from which the stamp was taken now belongs to the New York Historical Association in Cooperstown. The painting — a classic example of American folk art — was first discovered at a barn sale in Norway during the 1940s by art historian Jean Lipman, who purchased the piece for fifty cents and added it to her collection. It was acquired by the Historical Association in 1950.

After the issuance of the Christmas Stamp, local artist Lee Bean was commissioned by Norway Postmaster Fred Davis to copy the painting. An oil reproduction hangs in the lobby of the Norway Post Office as a permanent memento of the honor bestowed on the community with selection of a Norway Christmas Stamp scene.

"As Postmaster, I welcome any readers who should pass this way to take time to stop and view this masterpiece," says Davis.

### Life-After-Life

There was a large gathering ready to climb aboard the life-after-life boat at the recent seminar and lecture presented by Dr. Raymond Moody at Oxford Hills Junior High School under the sponsorship of the Interdisciplinary Committee. Dr. Moody, author of the book *Life After Life*, is a philosophy professor turned medical doctor turned author turned medical doctor again.

His book recounts discoveries drawn from close contact with "near death" patients,



pointing out the similarity in patients' accounts of what transpired during times they were "out." Among the most common recurring themes reported by patients to Dr. Moody, are occurrences of dark tunnels, caves or valleys, through which patients are rapidly shuttled into the presence of a warm, secure light; the sight of "dear ones" waiting to help the patient or urging his return; and near-death scenes viewed from above the body by the patient, acting as a sort of third uncommunicative person in a room filled with a panoramic review of life, and some type of evaluative instrument.

It's a fascinating study which, sadly, manages to make less-than-stirring reading. The book — on which the seminar was based — is redundant to the point of boredom. The patients keep being revived but the book falls dead. Perhaps Moody sensed this himself. He appeared about to abandon this particular life-after-life craft, announcing with obvious relish at the lecture's outset, that he was shortly to leave the post-life probings behind and move on to raising sheep and doctoring in some rural community. In fact, at one point, when he asked for audience assistance on the subject of sheep raising, we were given the distinct impression he found that topic much more to his immediate liking.

The fact is that the real message of Dr. Moody's morning lecture was more in tune with life *during* life than after. He urged on several occasions that his explorations into the possibility of what we used to call life after death be regarded as just that and no more — explorations of coincidences in reports given by victims of near-death experiences. He suggested ponderable possibilities. No theories. Not even a premise.

"No one who was dead has actually ever returned, since death is that state from which there is no return," said the doctor.

Although we didn't hang around for the afternoon workshops and panel discussion, reports indicate that participants geared up to re-evaluate some new kind of gospel based on Moody's life-after-life findings, not only had missed the boat, they had missed the doctor's message.

Moody, who appeared almost embarrassed by all the fuss over his book, deliberately played down philosophical debate in favor of discussing the needs of dying patients. The entire first lecture was

devoted to the dying person's concerns and, so far as we're concerned, this material appeared to be Dr. Moody's real contribution of the day. What's more, he seemed to think so, too. He urged medical colleagues in the audience — among them Donald Ware, William Medd and Michael Lacombe of Oxford Hills Internal Medicine Group, to lend sympathetic ears to dying patients needing to talk. He made the same plea for near-death and revived victims anxious to pour out their feelings to physicians, nurses, or ministers. Too often, the patient's needs are ignored, said the doctor.

What we had was an appealing lecturer — a man who seemed to be honest, direct and exceedingly human. He obviously touched his audience. Had he not mentioned it himself, we would have been prompted to urge a future career as a humorist. The doctor announced good-naturedly that his next project would be a book on the psychology of humor.

"A friend suggests I call it *Laugh After Laugh*," he quipped.

As to the validity of the after-life studies? We can't help but hope it's so. We're in favor of all the life we can get. In the meantime, there's always sheep raising.

### Hamster Hibernation

We were interested to hear of a piece which appeared recently in the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, cautioning owners of pet hamsters not to inadvertantly kill off their furry friends. The information, submitted, we're told, by a woman from Harrison, hit home since some relatives tearfully tossed away a pair of pet hamsters not long ago, thinking they'd died. Come to find out, hamsters apparently often go into hibernation during late fall and, with heart beats slowed down to such a degree they appear to have stopped altogether, the animals may easily be taken for dead. So, take a close look before you give up on your pet to make sure you haven't merely caught him or her napping.

*Sandy Wilhelm*

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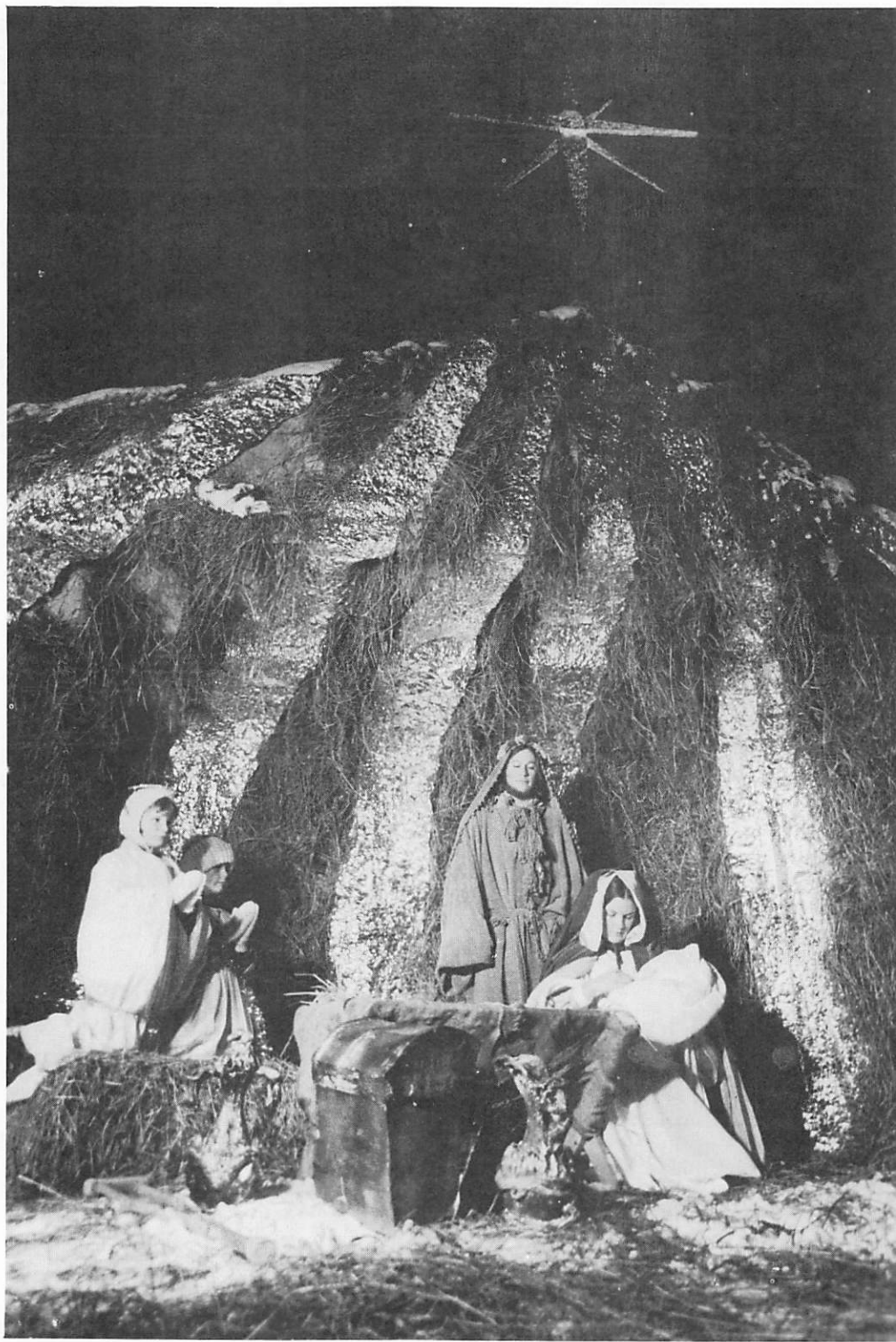
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# Christmas Traditions:

## Capturing the Holiday Essence

In Norway, letters addressed to Santa Claus have begun arriving daily at the office of Vocational Education Director Woody Allen.

In Bethel, citizens are on the lookout for two 200 pound angels.

In Fryeburg, cooks are preparing favorite holiday bread and candy recipes for town-distributed Christmas baskets.

For many in the three towns, Christmas has become synonymous with the community-wide holiday observances. It wouldn't be Christmas without the Kiwanis Club's Operation Santa Claus in Norway-South Paris, Bethel's impressive Living Nativity and the Fryeburg Community District Council's traditional Christmas packets.

"It's our way of saying Merry Christmas to one another in a manner that exhibits the essence of the holiday," explains Sue Farrar, who founded Bethel's Living Nativity 13 years ago.

Attempts are made to carry out the annual holiday events without letting their growth over the years undermine the original intent to provide a way for the community to share a personalized, intimate "spirit" of Christmas. Involving long hours of preparation and planning by hundreds of people, the holiday observances could easily become big-time extravaganzas, which would miss their mark. That's something the organizers work hard to avoid.

In the case of Operation Santa Claus, it's meant a complete change in program-direction this year.

"During the past six or seven years, the

project has gotten so big, it's taken on welfare overtones, with huge amounts of used clothing being shipped to us from places like the Brunswick Naval Air Station for distribution," recalls this year's Operation's Chairman, Woody Allen.

Scores of volunteers have worked madly at the Norway Armory in past years, racing the clock to sort donations i time for distribution, often having to discard as many as half the items because of bad repair. The cost of filling cases requesting items like new winter coats and shoes and boots had risen so high that many people simply couldn't afford to respond to the appeal any longer, according to Allen.

"Many of those things didn't mean a thing to the kids receiving them," he contends, "What child can get excited over underwear for Christmas, or even a shirt and a pair of pants?"

People in the community were also losing enthusiasm, he says. Participation in the project was dropping off dramatically.

Allen agreed to take over this year's drive providing Kiwanians would go along with a change in program philosophy, replacing the welfare thrust — which is carried out by several other agencies — with a scaled-down version of Christmas gift-giving.

"We're getting back to the idea that Christmas is for kids," says Allen. "We're asking people to tell us what the children want for Christmas, not what they need. And we're keeping the cost of each case to \$15 or under so that local residents can respond."

After screening by Kiwanis members in conjunction with school and town officials, the 300 or so children found eligible for the program this year will be asked to write letters to Santa Claus telling what types of

*Bethel's Holy Family — Amos Tobias and parents Larry and Lisa Fox — is admired by two tiny angels during the living nativity scene which unfolds each Christmas on the town common.*

... cont. page 10

# Christmas at



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MAIN STREET - NORWAY

Cont. from page 9

toys and games they'd like to find under the tree. Each request is then assigned a number and publicized through the local radio station and newspaper. People are asked to fill one or more of the anonymous orders. All information is kept strictly confidential.

Past appeals have been "too sterile" to rally residents, says Allen.

"The cases just didn't feel a part of Christmas," he says. "This year, we're trying to get back the human element of the giving. The point is to make a child feel happy at Christmas and give people filling the cases a good feeling about the holiday, too."

Replacing the traditional shoe and boot certificates included in each order filled by Operation Santa Claus in the past will be a festive Christmas dinner this year, complete with a 10 pound turkey, cranberry sauce, vegetables and pie mixes. People will be able to specify whether or not they want the holiday meal.

Operation Santa Claus began almost 25 years ago when inmates at the County Jail expressed a desire to make Christmas toys for needy children and the Kiwanis Club agreed to help distribute those toys. The involvement of local clubs, church and civic organizations has always been — and will continue to be — an important part of the program, according to Allen. Many knitted items have already been donated by various organizations for inclusion in the orders. School industrial arts departments will be donating hand-made toys. Members of the Oxford Hills High School Key Club and Keyettes will staff the telephone switchboard set up at the Block Store in Norway where people will call in to fill specific cases. The Keyettes will also handle wrapping and packaging of items this year. Buckets will be distributed throughout the two towns so that people wishing to donate money rather than gifts may do so.

Allen says he already considers this year's turn-around to be a success.

"From the applications we've received, I can sense that this is what people have

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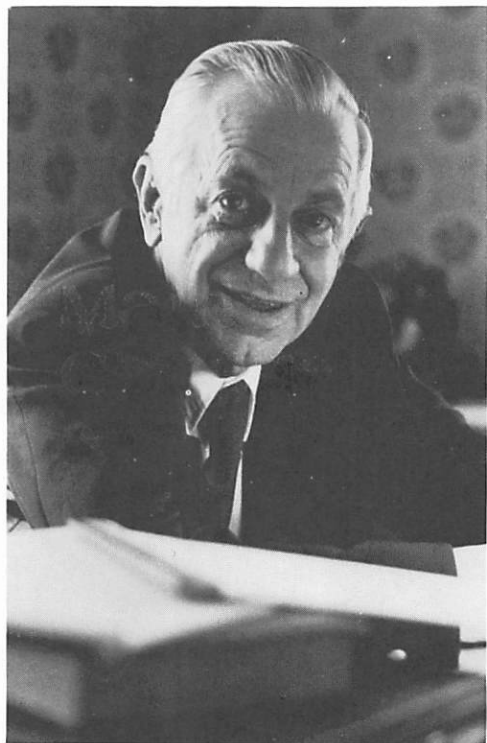
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Ned Willard

## NED WILLARD: CONTRADICTIONARY AND CONTRARY AS HELL

—by Sandy Wilhelm

*There is a major difference between your approach to Maine humor and that of Marshall Dodge and Bob Bryan of **Bert and I** fame. You're a student of what you've lived. They're looking at things through the eyes of New York natives. Is that an important distinction?*

Well, I've thought about that quite a bit. As a boy, growing up in Saco, I worked summers in a drug store, as a surveyor's helper, the usual things. In those days there

Ned Willard, born and raised in Saco, has been an English Professor at Hebron Academy for 31 years. It was at Hebron that he first crossed paths with Bob Bryan, who, as half the team on the **Bert and I** records, has been to Maine humor what baked beans are to Boston.

Bryan teamed up with sound effects wizard, Marshall Dodge, while both were undergraduates at Yale in the mid-1950s, and the rest is history. But, he first developed an ear for the downeast story while a student at Hebron, later drawing on such familiar Hebron haunts as East Vassalboro (where Academy boys made regular pilgrimages for dances at the Oak Grove School) as locations for recorded tales.

Now a minister with the Quebec Labrador Mission, Bryan has kept close ties with Hebron, where he serves on the board of directors and still occasionally picks up an idea or two which eventually becomes part of the rich **Bert and I** heritage.

really was no such thing as a class or social distinction in a small town. I'm talking now about the 1930s. I found it easy to talk with all kinds of people without making fun of them. I think that's an important part of Maine humor — not looking down at and making fun of, but rather capturing the truth of the, not ignorant, but illiterate country people — sixth-and-seventh-grade-graduates-who-can-barely-read-and-write people.

Can Dodge and Bryan be genuine without having lived their material?

Well, they're living it. They have the capacity to do that. Research would never do it. The minute they put it on that level, forget it. But, they have an ear for it. And don't forget, they aren't for real. They're always doctoring. There never was a Bangor Packet, although I can show you a Bangor Packet. There never was a Blue Bird, One or Two, but boats like that were around. Yes

and No. That's the whole thing. That's the fun. "I knew a fella who." Well, you never knew a fella who at all. But, yes, you did know a fella who. Contradictory, aren't we? Contrary as hell.

*Isn't there a heavy reliance in Bert and I humor, on the idea of city slicker versus wise rural type?*

... of which the rural type always won at the expense of the outsider, yes. It sure did exist. That's the whole point. There is a great deal of that in **Bert and I** and in all that kind of humor — Texas humor, and all the others. But nobody got put down within the community. And I think there's something of that in the *thing* that people try to define as the uniqueness of the Maine native. I think a good part of it is a kind of live and let-live sort of independence that is, I think, pretty real.

*I don't think there's much more of a tourist put down than the line "you can't get there from here."*

Well, the answer to that, of course, is why would you want to get there anyway.

*Some of that tourist material must have stemmed from the fact that Maine was vacationland for New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and so on. The summer complaint.*

And Canada. Yes, in part it did. Growing up in Saco next to Old Orchard, we developed "benevolent tolerance" for tourists. Old Orchard was a phenomenon. There was nothing like it anywhere on the east coast — a 9,000 or so population area going to 100,000 in the summer, all French Canadians. I remember so vividly the cars coming along Old Route One heading for Old Orchard down from Canada. I was very conscious of the tourists. We came down to look at them. They were a curiosity because they were so different.

They're less different today. If tourists come in their campers, you have a camper also so there isn't that difference. But, the middle class people of Arlington, Melrose and Medford, the Greater Boston suburbs, who came here then were quite different from the natives of Old Orchard and Saco. And the people who came to Norway Lake were quite different too. They aren't that different in lifestyle today.

*You're saying Maine people are less unique?*

Sure. We started out as the only state in the union — the only state of all the states — which was settled from west to east. That makes a difference. Every other state was settled from the coast inland toward the Pacific, following the westward movement all the way across to California. In a way

we've been a last outpost. There's been no immigration from the east. We don't have a whole bunch of herring chokers coming in. No blue nosers from Nova Scotia.

*But, now, instead of summer tourists you've got a bunch of out-of-staters coming in to live year-round.*

Yeh. They're trying to get across the border which is coming from west to east and you don't do that.

*And people here are changing through exposure to the outside world?*

Outside world in a pejorative phrase here. We think the inside world is pretty good.. I like to think of being exposed to the outside world like getting a disease.

*That's my point. The summer complaint came every summer and yet it didn't change things. People put up with it and it went away. But things are changing now.*

Those damned people are settled here year round. No more summer complaint. And the other obvious answers are the easiest to give. Quicker communication. Faster mobility. The trip from Bangor to Boston used to be several days' journey, then it became a day's journey and now it is a matter of hours and minutes. That sure makes a difference.

*Does that bother you?*

No, I like change. I want to live to the year 2000 just because I don't know — and I don't think you know — what they're going to call that year. Is it going to be "twenty hundred" or "two thousand"? When was the Battle of Hastings? One-thousand sixty-six? Who ever said that in the world? Are they going to say two-thousand sixty-six? What is **Life Magazine** going to do? Are they going to celebrate on the first day of the year 2000 or 2001? The turn of the century is January 1, 2001. But surer'n hell, **Life** will come out with the 21st century edition on the first day of the year 2000. But that won't be the first day of the century. There was no year zero.

That's the kind of silly thing that in Maine is pretty important. What is that year going to be called?

*Is Maine humor unique?*

Satire is nothing new. John Henry Falk, who appears on television's **Hee Haw** tells stories set in Texas, whose principal character he calls Pea Vine, using the same ... words that appear on **Bert and I** — or the same idea. There's nothing unique about Maine humor. It wouldn't be the same as

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## Cont. from page 10

wanted all along," he says, surveying one list requesting two truck models and a set of small blocks. "Because our application didn't specify toy requests, people apparently were afraid to send them," he says.

"From this year's batch of applications, I've already gotten that Christmas feeling."

In Bethel, folks have been in a holiday mood for more than a month now in anticipation of the town's annual Living Nativity Scene, held the Sunday prior to Christmas. Each year for the past 13, close to 200 townspeople have joined forces to plan and produce an impressive, moving, live re-enactment of the Birth of Christ on the town common.

To a tape-recorded narration of the traditional Bible story, with church bells chiming softly in the distance, young shepherds and the three wisemen wend their way along torch-lit paths from the Bethel Inn to the center of the common, where they gather at the side of the Holy Family. Angels hover over the scene. Sheep and oxen, burros and calves graze at the side of the straw-lined manger, marked by a brightly lit star identical to those which mark all roads leading to the common. A choir directs the throngs of people standing on the outskirts through strains of "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Away In A Manger," "What Child Is This," and "Silent Night." The words of the hymns crack the cold late afternoon air.

"When the scene is over, there's not a dry eye in the house," observes Town Clerk Merton Brown, who has coordinated the event for the past three years.

Despite extensive television coverage and loads of school children bussed all the way from Boston last year to witness the production, Brown is firmly committed to keeping the ritual "simple and real."

"We're a little protective of it all," he confides congenially. "We're not interested in making it a big production. There will never be any blow-up nativities or souvenir banners here."

In an effort to keep things on a small scale, local choreographer Sue Farrar, who instigated the living nativity 13 years ago

after spending some snowless Christmases in Phoenix, Arizona, set down some stiff guidelines at the outset. There would be no fancy purchased costumes for players. Instead, outfits would be fashioned from donated materials. Mrs. Farrar nixed suggestions to move the scene from the common to the Gould Academy football field — believed by some to be more suited to the staging — arguing the nativity would sacrifice its intimacy amid larger surroundings. And, rehearsals for actors and members of the choir were to be kept to a minimum. Players would run through their parts only three times for pointers on pantomiming. Choir members' warm-ups would be kept similarly brief.

"We don't want the thing to look staged," explains Mrs. Farrar.

All the work is strictly volunteer. The town manager is in charge of the removal of snow, an inevitable, if unwelcomed commodity in Maine in mid-December. Town police handle traffic, although people are asked to park cars a short distance from the square and move on foot toward the common. Local electricians take charge of special lighting. School children and churchgoers, boy scouts and girl scouts, American Legionnaires and their auxiliary members all help to design and build props and other decorations. In an effort to keep the event non-sectarian, choir members are recruited from all local churches.

Authenticity is stressed. Participants are reminded to remove watches, glasses and other out-of-period jewelry prior to their entrances. The Holy Family, itself, is an actual family living in the community, with a September-born baby (whose comfort is provided for by a cleverly-camouflaged heating pad nestled in the manger). A stand-in doll supplied in case of emergency has only been used once in 13 years, according to Brown. Most years, the identity of the family has been kept a secret until just prior to the event.

"It's so unusual to have everything alive," says Muriel Gillis, this year's publicity chairman. "The baby may actually let out a cry. The donkeys may neigh. You find the entire area becomes sort of transformed as a

result."

A special section has been set aside for the children to observe the proceedings from a front row station.

Although the Living Nativity has never had to be cancelled due to stormy weather, it has, not surprisingly, produced its share of near calamities. Mrs. Farrar recalls with a smile the first time a tape-recorded narration was played for the program, sending half a dozen sheep scaling the fence of the pen which held them. Members of the audience were hastily sent to drag them back to the pen. One year, a calf died in the historic Moses Mason House, where participants prepare for their performance. Another year, a skittish angel was sick on a stylish piece of furniture in the historic building.

But, that's all part of the fun, according to Brown, who once wound up driving a goat left behind at the common all the way home to East Bethel in the front seat of his car.

Following the two late afternoon performances (staged at 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.), all those taking part gather for dinner at a nearby church hall. Some of them have been taking part in the scene year after year. One of last year's shepherds, for instance, played the baby Jesus 12 years ago. Brown himself once also played the part of a

shepherd.

All of the cast members gathering for dinner exhibit a "warm and glowing feeling that radiates to the workers as it does to viewers of the scene," observes one volunteer, "They have been a part of something special."

"Being a bible student all my life, I was fascinated and spellbound," wrote Alice Chute of Bryant Pond in a letter to the *Bethel Citizen* following the first living nativity re-enactment.

"I stood in silence while the tears rolled down my face through it all. I am now 64 years old and nowhere have I witnessed what I did last night."

The Fryeburg Community District Council's Christmas Basket project rallies residents of Fryeburg and the six surrounding towns each year in a labor of love which provides nearly 75 households with more than a mere holiday meal.

"We're giving that special gift, the one beyond price, the gift that is never lost or broken or put away to gather dust... the gift of love, sincerity, sharing and caring for one another," says Anne Hastings, who has masterfully supervised the program for the past five years.

Mrs. Hastings says so many people now take part in the project that it's become



*Fryeburg's Maple Street Gang, delivering donated toys*

... cont. page 24





# CHRISTMAS WITH THE MILLETTS

(Fiction by John Garnham)

*Garnham is a teacher and part-time Oxford County farmer.*

This year it was Erlon's idea that caught us all up, and Erlon isn't noted for his ideas. He is the slowest of the six of us.

But, quite unexpectedly at dinner one night he said, "Why don't we hang Ma from the tree." This was a rather grand idea for a small, pale eight-year-old and we all applauded its magnitude. Mother wasn't quite sure what he meant, so she asked him to repeat it.

"Hang her from the tree," he said again, this time mustering more of that flat look of his. "Hang Margot, too, while you're at it." His voice drifted off mumbling still another of the youngsters' names.

Margot was quick to explain what Erlon meant. "Ornaments. He's talking about Christmas ornaments. He wants us to hang pictures of ourselves as ornaments on the tree." She turned her frizzy head up and down the dinner table looking for support.

Sixteen and resembling Orphan Annie, she was the prettiest of all the children and obviously the quickest thinker. She found what she sought in mother's nervous smile.

"That's a wonderful idea," mother modulated evenly.

Erlon was now resting his forehead in his mashed potatoes, an after-dinner habit he'd been trying to acquire for weeks.

"Just a wonderful idea," mother repeated slowly.

The twins were not so enthusiastic. "It's crummy. I don't like it," said Jack. "It's crummy. I don't like it," said John. The twins, named after President Kennedy, were identical ten-year-old Robert Redford replicas right down to the dimples. They were slow, but not so slow as Erlon.

"I decided to make peace." "Mother likes the idea, Margot likes it, I like it and Erlon thought of it, so we do it." Erlon at this point lifted his head and, with it, his potatoes, and

gave the twins a most menacing flat look. They became enthusiasts.

Over dessert we decided that artistic freedom was essential. Margot suggested carving herself out of soap; Mother thought she'd mold a papier mache sculpture. John said he could cut and paste himself out of construction paper. Jack said he could cut and paste himself out of construction paper. I thought on a grander sale of stuffing with straw a pair of pants and a shirt, sewing them together scarecrow-fashion and recreating my head from a large acorn squash. I envisioned eyes of festive flashing green and red lights.

Excitement ran high and the household atmosphere remained highly charged during the two weeks before Christmas. Behaviors changed drastically. Margot locked herself in her room and was rarely seen. The twins fought constantly and appeared for dinner on three consecutive evenings pasted together. Mother's nervous disorder reappeared. Perspiration beaded her upper lip. She walked only sideways with her back to the wall and hung a bread knife from her housedress belt. I spent my time in the basement carving squash and sewing. Erlon's behavior varied little from its normal pattern, being comprised almost exclusively of 67 irritating habits.

We were all so busy with our own projects that we took little notice of each other's. No one thought of asking about anyone else's until mother broached the subject with Erlon as late as three days before Christmas. It was at dinner. She placed her bread knife on the table as a peace gesture and folded her hands prayerfully. "I was wondering, Erlon," she began, "how you're progressing with your tree decoration?" Erlon stared blankly at the wall. "None of us has any idea, dear, what you've planned." A slight agitation crept into mother's otherwise smooth tone, but Erlon remained mute. "It's very industrious of a boy of eight to take on a project like this, all alone, without some help from the rest of us." Erlon's small, pale face began sinking slowly toward his plate. "But, of course, it was your idea and we all owe you a real debt of gratitude." Erlon disappeared into his potatoes.

That Christmas Eve was memorable. Margot came running downstairs with what appeared to be a roll of shelf paper. We all laughed with surprise when she unrolled a

photograph of herself blown up to poster proportions. It was a black and white picture of her standing on Norway Lake Beach, wearing her first two-piece suit. With crayon she had colored her suit green and her cheeks red and had drawn a sprig of holly on her hair. Mother exclaimed, "How festive! How appropriate!" Margot hung her creation on the front of the tree.

Then the twins ran in, holding their hands behind their backs. We almost burst with anticipation before they could synchronize their presentation. They had made identical stick figures from pipe cleaners. These were hung on either side of Margot's picture. "Get yours, Dad," John pleaded, "Get yours, Dad," Jack pleaded. So I fetched my electrified scarecrow with the squash head. It was as big as I, with straw hands and straw feet, a cranberry nose, Christmas tree light eyes and mop hair. We had to guy wire the tree to the walls and the floor so it could carry the weight, but we finally hung him.

Mother's was a complete surprise. Pretending the tree was a mannequin, she covered it and Margot's poster, the twins' figures and my scarecrow with her red empire-waisted evening gown. Just the tip of the tree remained visible, poking through the neck. Onto this she pinned a polaroid of her face. The tree was completely covered.

In all the excitement, Erlon's absence had gone unnoticed.

"And it was his idea," Margot said bitterly as the family, drained and exhausted, sat around the living room waiting for him to appear.

"Maybe he forgot what his idea *was*," I suggested. "He is pretty slow."

"Maybe he forgot what night this was," John and Jack surmised simultaneously. "He's not very good with dates."

"Maybe he didn't make anything for the tree and he's embarrassed," Margot theorized. "He's not very good with his hands." We waited until we ran out of ideas. And then we ran out of energy and, one by one, fell asleep around the tree.

The next morning Erlon was also asleep under the tree, having materialized as if brought by Santa. We were a little anxious that Mother was missing until we noticed that Erlon had hung her from the tree.



# O, CHRISTMAS TREE

A Talk with  
Two Oxford County Growers

—by Cathy Flynn

*Flynn, who has worked for the Portland Press Herald and Waterville Sentinel, is a freelance journalist.*

O, Christmas tree,  
O, Christmas tree,  
How beautiful your branches are.

— German Christmas song

This ode to the Christmas tree brings to mind the days when families trudged through snowy woods behind the house in search of just the right Christmas tree.

Now much of those woods has been cleared for urban growth and many Mainers shop roadside stands or parking lots for a holiday tree, paying up to \$15 for a scrawny spruce or fir.

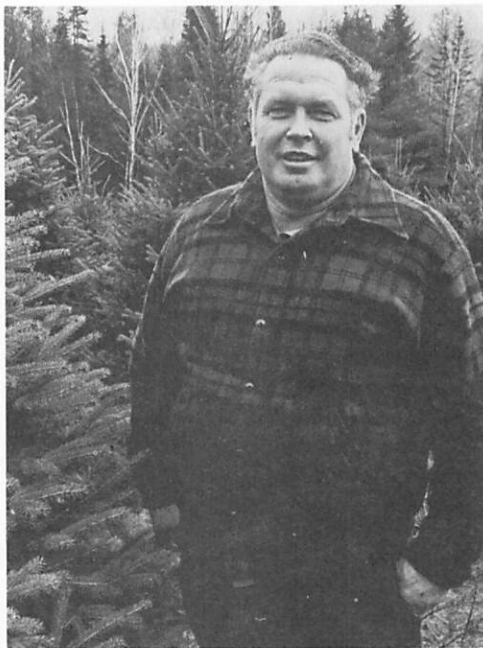
For one Oxford County resident, the month of December means scrambling to meet out-of-state demand for Maine-grown trees. For another, it's time spent taking advantage of holiday tree demand to clear out a small woodlot.

At Edwin "Eddie" Emerson's in Norway, Christmas trees are big business indeed. Although Maine ranks only 10th among Christmas tree suppliers nationwide, the 47-year-old businessman expects to sell \$30,000 worth of white spruce, balsam and Douglas fir trees this season.

Emerson, who owns or manages about 120 acres of trees in Norway and North Waterford, concedes, however, that the sale of Christmas trees is not his most lucrative business. He also owns ABC Rubbish and sells real estate.

"I have maybe five or ten businesses I could earn a living from," explains the husky entrepreneur, "But I would get bored with only one thing to do all the time."

So while Emerson is busy with his many corporations, he may hire as many as 12 men to help him cut Christmas trees which were



Eddie Emerson

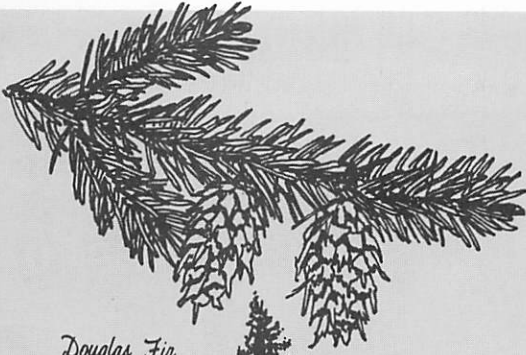
planted from seedlings, trimmed to improve bud growth and fertilized by hand. He will harvest 6,000 trees this winter and eventually hopes to handle 10,000 trees a year.

Emerson Enterprises charges \$6 per tree if buyers pick them up at his Waterford Road farm, located about six miles north of Norway. Trees are \$7 each if Emerson's own trailer trucks deliver them (to points as far south as New Jersey). That's the wholesale price. It costs \$8 for people to come to his land and cut their own.

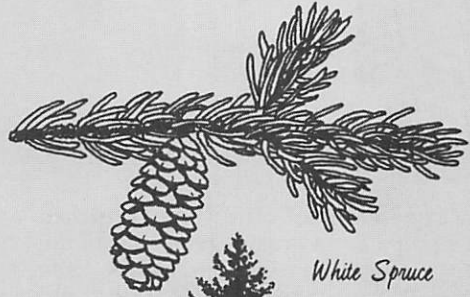
Using seedlings grown at Western Maine Forest Nurseries in Fryeburg, Emerson planted 8,000 Douglas fir trees last spring and 14,000 of them two years ago. Valuable because of their soft needles and blue-green color, the Douglas fir commands the highest price of any Christmas tree, about \$10 in Maine and triple that price in cities further south. It usually takes up to 10 years for a Christmas tree to grow to an average six-foot height and to proper fullness, but the company will have some of these prized trees ready to cut within six years. Anticipating the demand for Douglas fir,

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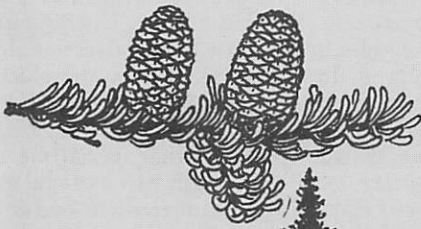
MAINE'S MOST COMMON  
CHRISTMAS TREES



*Douglas Fir*



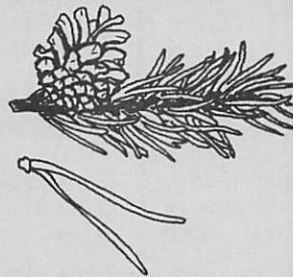
*White Spruce*



*Balsam Fir*



*Scotch Pine*





# THE EGG (AND LOTTIE) AND I

by Pat White Gorrie

*Gorrie, a former newspaper columnist, is living in Otisfield with her two young sons.*



Once upon a time, Lottie Record preached from a pulpit as an ordained minister in the Advent Christian Church. Now she ministers to quite another kind of flock and her charisma never fails her.

Long before I moved up here from Philly, I read about the rugged independence of Mainers. Lottie turned out to be "it" all right: Rugged Independence with a Twinkle in its Eye. She can chop wood, play the French horn, trumpet and guitar, fix a truck motor, put an intricate model fire-engine together, build a bookcase or a house, ham it up on her CB radio, chop off a chicken's head, pluck it and clean it in no time flat, all with equal aplomb. She works like ten men, laughs as heartily as a five-year-old, and has such a soft interior that she burst into tears the first time she shot a deer, an eight-point buck. "It was an awful long time before I could go huntin' again," she admits.

You can't put a label on Lottie; she's an original. But if you can picture Peter Pan walking around in Ma Kettle's body, it may give you a clue.

One of these days Lottie will get back to her Bible and her pulpit but in the meantime she is running an egg business with oomph. Lottie has "soul" and her chickens know it. They lay the biggest eggs in the State of Maine, some of them three-yolkers.

I have one hanging from my kitchen window. It's suspended from nylon fishing line and empty of its contents, which I blew out after poking holes in each end; and it looks — to my city-girl eyes — as big as a

stork egg, if storks, in fact, lay eggs and not just babies.

I don't know if it's Lottie's "soul" or her warm and whimsical ways that have infected her chickens with so much personality.

One of them — Pantaloon Pattie — is as demure and flirtatious in her layers of feathered petticoats and bloomers as a Southern belle. If there were a chicken model agency, she'd be spread all over magazine covers; maybe even the centerfold of Playrooster. Pattie is a White Cochon but she snuggles up to Lottie like an affectionate puppy and the two of them talk and cluck sweet nothings back and forth like a couple of lovebirds.

Hatty CarnEGGie is another special one, a White-Crested Black Polish hen as regal as an opera star, her bouffant frosted "hairdo" falling over her eyes like bangs and her feathered bustle bouncing up and down behind her with every step she takes. You can't help but admire her; she's gorgeous.

Lottie built her hen hotel, the Chicken Hilton, almost single-handed. It adjoins the barn where her pet goats ("...they are costing me a fortune in feed but I love them too much to sell them.") are, and houses such feathered babies and beauties as her Rhode Island Reds, Plymouth Rocks, Bredmers and Silver Spangled Hamburgs, five-toed Mottled Houdans, Buff Minorcas, Blue Andalusians and even a saucy little Olde English Game Hen. The place is sort of a cross between Disneyland, the United Nations, and a Picasso painting. No wonder the sign says, "Maine's Most Contented Hens." They nest and rest in Waldorf-

Astoria comfort, and they have loving Lottie to provide room-and-maid service and companionship, besides. No architect could have done it better. Each breed has its own picture-windowed suite looking out on a vista of pine and birch, and the floors are lushly carpeted (in sawdust). Lottie keeps the whole shebang immaculate. The chicken "gold" is trucked over to my garden periodically.

I knew Maine would hold lovely surprises for me but little did I realize, when I first spotted Lottie's RUPALOT FARM (it stands for Ruth, Paul and Lottie, the trio who live there), on Gore Road in Oxford, that I'd soon be getting more excited over the prospects of opening an egg box than I used to be over a package from John Wanamaker's. Lottie's eggs are more precious to me than jewels. We ooh and ahh over them like connoisseurs of fine wine, admiring their shape, color, size and girth. The contents are merely the icing on the cake. They make the world's best omellettes! (Maurice, are you listening?)

Sometimes, Lottie tucks in a surprise for me. Maybe it'll be a "preemie" — a miniature egg no bigger than your fingernail, slipped in like the dot on the exclamation point next to a giant of an egg that weighs over three ounces.

Once there was even an egg WITHIN an egg.

For weeks we waited for Lottie's South American Araucanas to grow old enough and big enough to start laying. It was like being an expectant parent. Every week I'd rush to open my egg box, like a kid diving into an Easter basket, and finally it was there. Our first *green* egg! I get a dozen greenies every week now, and save the shells. On snowy days the boys and I will paint and decorate them. I'll line up little "families" of them like Matrushka dolls and glue them to a piece of bark. And we'll cut windows in some of them and create little fairylands inside with bits of moss and rock, a few dried flowers and tiny ceramic animals.

When the boys were little I used to read them a Dr. Seuss book called, "Green Eggs and Ham." We thought it was pretty far-out at the time.

Who'da thunk it!

**BitterSweet** invites readers to write for **Readers' Journal**, and will pay \$15 for any feature-length article that's printed.

# Sweet Finds



The Jule Neg, an old Norwegian holiday tradition, is easily adapted to life in these parts and lends a simple but satisfying note to the celebration of Christmas Day. When translated into English, the term "Jule Neg" means Christmas Bundle. Years ago, during harvest time in Scandinavia, farmers would set aside several of the best bundles of wheat. On Christmas Eve, the bundles were brought out, decorated with brightly colored ribbons and then stationed outside on posts. In the morning, the wheat served as a special treat for backyard birds.

Although it's too late to harvest special bundles for the birds this year, there's no reason why a little bit of the hay sitting in the barn couldn't be decorated and then tied to a bird feeder or fence post as a makeshift Jule Neg this season. Next year, specially shocked bundles would be unique Thanksgiving hostess gifts — perhaps the start of an easy, thoughtful holiday gift-giving tradition.



Want to send out inexpensive yet priceless Christmas cards? Buy plain postcards, or a pad of paper and envelopes. Using Christmas colors, have your child draw a picture of your family and sign it. Add your own holiday message. Your friends and relatives will love it! If the list is long and the child is young, reserve this treat for close relatives.



# Folk Tales

Leroy Frank



## SANTA CLAUS STAND-IN

When you look like Leroy Frank, December is bound to be a busy month. A runner-up in the National Enquirer's Santa Claus Look-Alike contest two years ago, Frank is a stand-in for St. Nick at the Oxford Mormon Church's Christmas party each year. He's been donning his Santa Claus suit for Lewiston's Christmas parade for more years than he cares to remember, and, until most stores gave up the practice, he was hearing Christmas requests from knee-perched kiddies from all over the area.

Frank, whose address is East Poland — not North Pole — says he "kinda enjoys" all the attention.



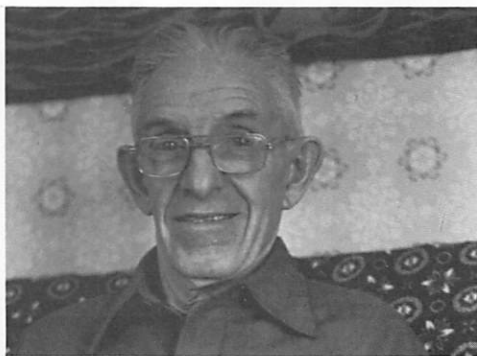
**BitterSweet** welcomes brief news items on neighbors-of-note from readers. Material should be sent to **BitterSweet**, One Madison Avenue, Oxford, Maine 04270.

## HONORED

It came as such a surprise, he didn't even dress up, but Merritt Roakes stole the show just the same, at the Norway-Paris Fish and

Game Club's recent testimonial dinner held in his honor.

Roakes, 79, was cited for his dedication to the "preservation of wildlife and conservation of nature" by the local club and presented a plaque, gold watch, and bronze wildlife statue in recognition of his many years of service. An award of merit was given the former aviation mechanic by the State Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.



Merritt Roakes

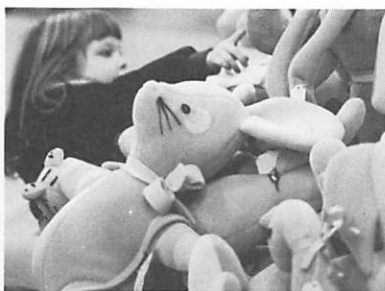
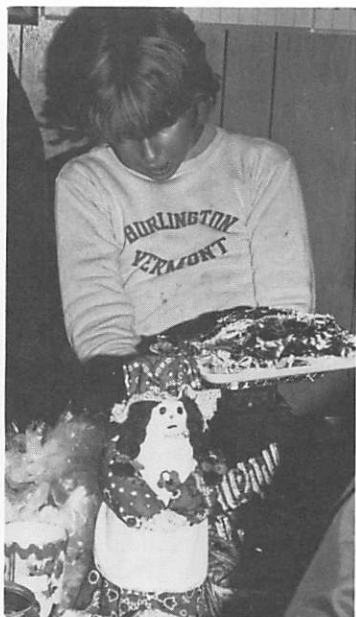
A native of Falmouth, Roakes joined the local fish and game association after he retired in this area in 1971. He has spent many long hours working to improve the group's property and shooting range on Streaked Mountain and has been a prime mover on the Paris Conservation Commission, working on both the group's nature preserve and the new Stony Brook Park. He was practically a one-man beautification effort last spring, when he planted and tended flower gardens along Main Street near the Paris Town Garage and the old railroad station, using seedlings he had started while in California last winter and then lugged back aboard the plane. He'll soon be leaving again to spend the winter in California with his son and will be taking advantage of the warmer clime to get the jump on next year's — as yet, unspecified — projects.

A present or past member of nearly two dozen wildlife, conservation or hunting groups, Roakes says he's always spent his time on "outdoor things."

"I'm sure we'll have something going again next year," he said.



## CHRISTMAS BAZAARS A HOLIDAY INSTITUTION



At a seemingly endless series of weekend sales, church groups and civic clubs, school children and craftspeople have begun displaying their holiday wares in the hopes that at least a few of the items will wind up under somebody's tree come Christmas morning.

Vicki Williams appears a bit overwhelmed by United Methodist Church Fair events in Bridgton. Clara Rolse and Carla Bennett tend the notions table at the West Bethel Union Church Fair. Rick Williams weighs out fudge in Bridgton. Marilyn Gilbert chats with Olive Head at West Bethel. Jessica Miller of North Waterford gives a batch of handmade toys the touch test at the Vocational Region 11 Fair in South Paris while a pensive Joe Staples minds the Cub Scout Pack No. 166 store.

Happy Shopping and Merry Christmas!



**Cont. from page 15**

impossible to pinpoint exact numbers of participants. At least three dozen businesses are solicited for turkeys each year. Dozens of church and scout groups donate various canned goods. Scores of cooks in the area bake breads and make candy. Local farmers and orchardists provide potatoes, apples, and other produce, as available. Club members and school children knit items and assemble toys. In all, 47 organizations, clubs and businesses are part of the annual event.

"The point is to involve everyone, not just a few people who do it all themselves," says Mrs. Hastings, who was particularly pleased to receive a call this year from a woman who read about the project in the local paper and then organized her neighborhood children to donate some discarded toys which were still in mint condition.

"Once people get involved, they usually keep coming back," Mrs. Hastings adds.

Months of preparation culminates in a brief, 45 minute packing session at the all-purpose room of the Charles A. Snow School on the Saturday before Christmas. The items are arranged according to categories — corn, peas, green beans, boiled onions, homemade breads, candy, turkeys, stuffing mix, fruit juices, pie fillings, Indian pudding, chowder, apples, oranges, baked beans, squash, potatoes, and assorted wrapped packages. Color-coded boxes are marked with the number of people in each family, along with ages of children so that appropriate gifts can be added, and filled rapidly by half a dozen seasoned workers. Once the packets are assembled, they are dropped at a central station where they're picked up by local delivery people from each town. By noon, the baskets have reached their final destination.

"It's incredible. It works like clockwork. You've got to see it to believe it," grins Mrs. Hastings.

She says the present procedure is the result of years of refinement through trial and error. For instance, breads are now prepared in pie-filling cans, so that loaves are small enough that two or three different kinds can be put in one basket. That way, a

family can have a variety and people living alone can avoid waste by fixing only a small portion. Turkeys are given only to families with three or more members. Couples or single people receive roasting chickens instead.

Nobody knows that a basket is coming until it actually arrives and it's making those deliveries which is the most fun for volunteers, according to Mrs. Hastings. Names of recipients are suggested by town officials.

"We're not just delivering to people in financial need," she explains. "People who are alone at the holidays are included, too — elderly people who don't have much to look forward to. We simply tell people when we leave a basket that people in town wanted them to be remembered. We've never been rejected. I doubt we ever will be."

The secret to the program's success, says Mrs. Hastings, lies in its personal touch.

"The key is in finding enough people who are willing to give not money, but time," she says. "We've been lucky to find enough people here who are keyed into the word hope."

While community sponsored activities have in many cases replaced many of the old home-based holiday traditions, there are still some people in these parts who manage to take part in community projects and still hold on to special personal observances as well.

One local woman takes her family to an aunt's house every Christmas where they have a "sing." But this is no ordinary gathering. Among the instruments played by family members are trumpet, guitar, piano, banjo, and harmonica. They sing some American Christmas carols, and some Finnish songs. But, unlike other families, this one sings several carols with Japanese lyrics — a great way to remember a few years of their lives spent in Japan.

On a more practical note, a Norway woman prepares a delicious Christmas meal, usually Lobster Newburg, which her family enjoys on Christmas Eve. And a few days before Christmas, she cooks a turkey or

... cont. page 30

# We've! Got It!



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# Homemade

Angela Murphy's Applesauce Fruit Cake was the hit of the Bridgton Methodist Church's Christmas Fair. we know because we wound up buying a loaf, after youth group member Susan Kimball told us what a "terrific cook" the minister's wife was. She was right.

The recipe comes from the Bath Methodist Church, where Mrs. Murphy's husband, Michael, was once pastor. Italian-born Angela says it's a snap to prepare.

*Angela Murphy wrapping  
Christmas bread*

## INGREDIENTS:




- ½ cup shortening
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup hot applesauce
- 1 heaping teaspoon soda, dissolved in applesauce
- 2 cups flour
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon powdered cloves
- ½ cup seedless raisins
- 1 small jar maraschino cherries
- ½ cup mixed candied fruit
- nuts are optional



Cream the shortening, add salt. Add sugar gradually. Sift flour and measure. Sift together with cinnamon and cloves, reserving 2 or 3 tablespoons of flour before adding spices, to stir into candied fruits. Heat applesauce in a big pot, add soda and stir. Add liquid from jar of cherries to applesauce. Combine creamed mixture and sifted flour mixture. Add floured fruit, raisins, cherries.



Divide evenly into two 4½ by 3½ by 2½ loaf tins which have been greased and floured. Bake at 300 degrees for a little over an hour. \*

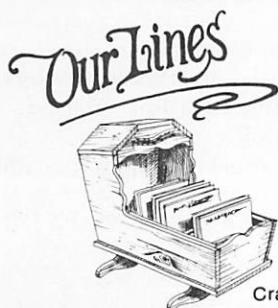
# PUBLIC NOTICE

It has been brought to our Attention that a portion of the  population scattered across the local  countryside is unaware of the substantial  Savings which can be realized by purchasing various & sundry goods at:

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# Inroads

## WHERE (AND HOW) TO CUT YOUR OWN TREE

—by Kevin Hamilton

*Hamilton, an announcer with Norway's radio station WOXO/WXIV, lives in Bridgton.*

Judging from the past few yuletide seasons, with their concentration on the pre-packaged concept, generations to come may well fell their Christmas trees with a blowtorch and a wrench. But, until that time, cut-your-own-tree enthusiasts can find the genuine article at Bill Crim's in Bridgton. Drive past Pleasant Mountain on Route 302 and turn 2/5 of a mile after the Bridgton-Fryeburg town line. Take the next left and have your pick of fir, spruce or Scotch pine. Billy will greet you and guide you through his two lots. You can tag the tree of your choice and pick it up at a future date, or go ahead and cut one down yourself. Six dollars either way.

Choosing the best-looking Christmas tree is relatively easy, but Bill notes the balsam fir smell the best and last the longest. Balsam can be distinguished from white spruce by checking the growth of the needles, which sprout from the sides of a fir twig, swooping upwards, like an upside-down moustache. The spruce, on the other hand, have needles covering the entire twig circumference. Any bushy branches you find will be connected to a Scotch pine.

Now the removal. Billy uses a saw, not an axe, and if you've ever slipped in the snow and fallen on a sharp, rooted stick, you'd know why. He emphasizes the importance of getting as close to the bottom of the tree as possible. When you get the tree home, simply cut any excess from the bottom half if it turns out too tall. This enables you to make

wreaths from the extra boughs, and also makes a fresh cut, allowing the tree to drink water. (The sap from the initial pruning has by now clogged the trunk.)

Another factor in making your tree choice is the amount of snow which lies on the ground. If you spot a beautiful tree standing about six feet high in two feet of powder, you can be sure there's another 24 inches of growth hidden under the snow. And if you cut the tree down at snow level, you leave behind a large stump to reckon with come spring.

Of course, dragging your prize by the trunk is the easiest way to maneuver it to the car. Bill insists there's no risk of damage, unless the snow is unusually crusty. Once inside the house, keep the tree away from sources of heat and be prepared for lots of watering. A healthy Christmas tree can soak up over a gallon of water a day.

The Crims know their trade. Bill's grandfather in Denmark sells 300 trees each winter to commercial buyers, and his father planted the trees which Bill markets, as saplings back in 1958. Bill took over the business three years ago, at the age of 12. He's now a freshman at Fryeburg Academy and, like so many businessmen, he finds outside interests like track and homework are keeping him from his job. So don't be surprised if his little sister, Heidi, meets you at the door. She's just been elected President of the company.



## TIME-TESTED, DO-IT-YOUR-SELF CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

—by Kathy Zarcone

*A registered nurse and mother of two, Zarcone says she's crazy about Christmas.*

In my own family, we have a few holiday traditions. Although unplanned, they seem to occur each year. Let's just say that these things "make" the season familiar and comforting. And you can incorporate these customs into your own home:

1. Have a fight with your spouse. It allows for guilt feelings which will eventually turn into love — which is what Christmas is all about.

2. Oversleep on the day your company is due to arrive. It makes them feel welcome. And if they still don't feel welcome, have a fight with them. It allows for guilt feelings which will eventually turn into love — which is what Christmas is all about.

3. If you find that you're not enjoying the holidays, try to picture in your mind how Christmas used to be. For instance, remember how trees used to be green and smell like pine or balsam? And you'd either chop your own or buy one freshly cut? Now they smell like empty milk cartons and have alternating red, blue and silver needles. They are put together in five minutes, and cost you twenty dollars (or ten dollars if you buy them during last year's January sales).

4. Try to keep Christmas simple. For some, it may mean spending only \$92.50 on each child for gifts, which will buy one doll that wets, throws up, hiccups, dances, stands on her head while singing the Hit Parade, has the strength of Muhammed Ali, and 54 batteries in her left cuticle; a matching bionic bathroom set and a mini hair dryer that converts into a powerful secret weapon. For others, a simple Christmas may mean avoiding the "Christmas Rush" — that is, shopping anytime before April 24th.

5. And finally, overcook the turkey, burn the cookies and forget to bring your third cousin's Christmas gift to the family party. Then leave to pick up your brother at the airport in the middle of Christmas dinner, develop engine trouble on the way, arrive late only to find out that the flight's been delayed, and end up getting a ticket because you parked in a towaway zone.

All this assures that a good time will be had by all. \*

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Cont. from page 24

ham. This way she can enjoy her family, the tree, and the festivities of Christmas without cooking that day. The family members can take cold food whenever they want it without a lot of work on her part.

Eleanor Damon, of West Poland says that when she was a girl growing up, each Christmas morning her family would have fresh homemade chicken pie with their coffee for breakfast.

At the home of Mrs. Edna Thurston in Norway, a unique Christmas tree hangs year-round in the front hall. During the holidays, it's lit up. A base of styrofoam is covered with a variety of small items having special meaning to the Thurston family. Jewelry, beads, knick-knacks, and other memorabilia are glued onto the frame, which is attached to a green felt backing.

The family members have contributed such items as class rings, earrings from different states in the U.S., a Kennedy half-dollar, and Air Force wings representing Mrs. Thurston's son's 20 years of service. This unusual "family tree" has something from almost every family member. Even family pet "Sammy" has made a contribution — his first genuine "dog tags" from New Mexico, his birthplace!

Veronica Braun, of German descent, now living in this area, says that when she was a child living in Europe, Dec. 6 was designated St. Nicholas Day. St. Nick was supposed to be the helper of Christ Kindel (Christ Child) who brought the gifts on Christmas Eve. On Dec. 6, if little children awakened to discover small bowls filled with sweets, nuts, dates, prunes and other goodies, they could be sure of getting presents from Christ Kindel on Christmas Eve. If St. Nick left a switch instead, it served as a warning to the child to behave well so that he'd receive gifts at Christmastime.

Then, on Dec. 23, a tree was put up where the children couldn't see it, in a locked room, and decorated by the adults. During the evening of Dec. 24, a bell would ring. The door was unlocked. This meant that Christ

... cont. page 32

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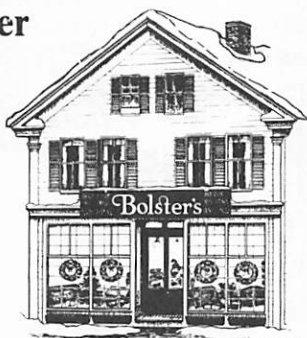
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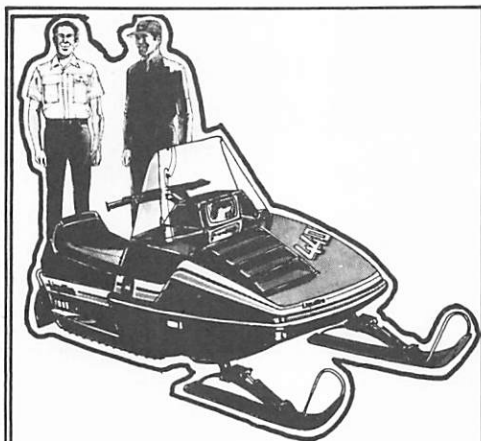
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Cont. from page 30

Kindel had been there with packages for everyone. Besides the gifts, the children could see the beautifully decorated tree for the first time. Candies wrapped in red and white tissue paper hung from the tree. Now and then, they could take one.

Paula Allen of South Paris reports that each newborn child in her family receives a Christmas tree ornament with the child's name on it during the holiday season. She buys a solid-colored ornament and paints the name on it herself. Then, a few days before Christmas, the tree is decorated. The last decorations on the tree are the children's own ornaments, which are placed on the tree one at a time. Usually, the youngest child goes first, since in the excitement, it's hard to wait for turns.

This is a Christmas tradition that has lasted a long time in the Allen family. And Paula feels it should continue. When she and her husband were first married, her grandfather gave her husband an ornament with his name on it. Paula feels the custom is very meaningful and it would sadden her to see it lost. She's hoping her children will continue it when they are older and have families of their own. Just to remind them, she'll be sending their ornaments off with them when they marry.

Whether as participants in community-sponsored seasonal observances or as practitioners of time-honored family holiday rituals, people who perpetuate Christmas traditions find themselves a little richer for it.

"Before we began this project, Christmas was usually upon the town before people realized it and was over before anyone knew it," summarizes a longtime worker with Bethel's Living Nativity. "Observance each year of the Living Nativity makes us all a little more aware of the depth of Christmas. It helps cement people together and adds meaning to their lives."





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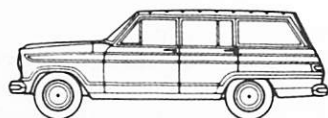
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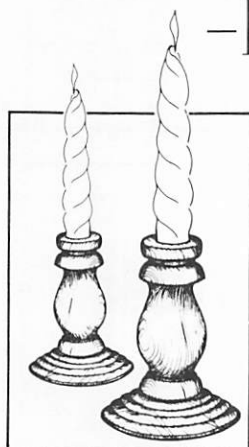
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### Cont. from page 18

Emerson planted early. With improved fertilizers, weed control and better genetic make-up of seedlings, the growing time can be shortened and trees can now be planted five instead of six feet apart on all sides, he explains.

"The price of a good Christmas tree is going up all the time," he says. "About a dollar a tree per year."

In addition to the wholesale distribution of Christmas trees, Emerson also mails holiday trees from his home on Route 118.

"We can send a six-foot Christmas tree anywhere in the United States," he says, boasting of having once mailed one all the way to his daughter in Montana. He mails about 200 trees a year (by United Parcel Service and Motor Express) and sells 500 more on the cut-your-own terms.

Promoting Christmas trees is nothing new to Emerson. He has served as president of the Maine Christmas Tree Growers for the last two years. The 30-year old organization is comprised of 300 private foresters, growers and state and federal employees and their families. About 130 farmers in Maine grow Christmas trees part-time. Only four or five of them consider themselves full-time producers, Emerson says. The group distributes silvacultural and marketing information for growers and shows premium trees in fairs and shopping malls.

Because Christmas trees are in such demand in populated states like Massachusetts and New Jersey, most of Emerson's trees are already spoken for, and some were paid for as early as last July.

### Only A Sideline

For a retired mechanic in Bethel, the Christmas tree business is merely a sideline adventure for a few weeks each December.

"Most people only complain that this one's not good enough and that one's not good enough," says 71-year-old Randal Stevens, who cuts and markets a few dozen Christmas trees every year from a pine woodlot he owns.

"But it's hard to find a good Christmas tree," he told *BitterSweet*, while surveying the six acres of trees under his management. The spruce and fir trees which spring up among his white pines need to be cleared to



*Ranald Stevens*

allow the valuable lumber and pulp-producing wood to grow, Stevens explains. He began selling those trees more than ten Christmases ago to pay what then amounted to \$10 in property taxes for his small woodlot on the Middle Intervale Road.

Today, the same piece of land is assessed at \$60. At a modest \$2 or \$3 a tree, which is all Stevens charges, he'll have to sell about 25 trees from his dooryard this month.

"My wife and I will go down on a Sunday afternoon and get six or eight trees," he says, "We like to keep them fresh, so after we sell them, we'll go back for some more."

Stevens recalls one year when the elements worked to his advantage. The snow was waist-deep and he sold more trees than ever that year, because no one wanted to venture into the woods to "steal them."

He once caught a would-be thief toting a hand-saw at his side. When confronted by Stevens, the man claimed he was actually on his way to cut a tree on a neighbor's land further up the hill — an unlikely story, according to Stevens.

Another time, Stevens said he got "kinda mad when Christmas tree poachers used a snow plow to make it easier for them to haul a tree off his property. They left behind a pile of snow so deep Stevens was unable to get into his woodlot the rest of that winter.

Pointing to a clump of trees in need of thinning, Stevens spots a plump spruce with a dense, spirelike crown. "There, that's a fine Christmas tree. Some look good after you cut them, some don't. But after you decorate them up, they all look nice."



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# Ayah

We consider your comments and suggestions an important means of discovering our readers' interests. Representative and appropriate letters will be published as space allows. Most likely answers won't be necessary, and probably the only response you'll receive will be a most appropriate "Ayah!"

### To The Editor:

Please accept our sincere appreciation and gratitude for the fine feature story on Barber Shopping in the first issue of Bitter-Sweet.

I have mailed copies to Jim Dunn, the visitor from Manchester, Conn. and to International Headquarters at Kenosha.

The Hillsmen Chorus wish you and Bitter-Sweet every success.

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### To The Editor:

Our goal for a time has been to visit Oxford County. We did last weekend and enjoyed it ever so much. At a store (grocery) in West Paris I noticed **BitterSweet**. That night I noticed it was Vol. 1 Issue 1; I don't want to miss an issue — Enclosed is our subscription.

We are looking forward to the day when we can move to Oxford County. And the Maine Cottage — Handmade Gifts is very much a part of our anticipations.

I noted its location driving by at the last moment and looked frantically for a place to park nearby. We did not stop then but will in the spring.

After reading Mother Earth and such — I realize that one just does not come into country without bringing something with them. I'm initiating a business — crafts and cloth items — now as Aunt Bee. A first show is in December as I finish being Record Clerk for four years.

Yes, we are preparing for that day of

finding the spot for us; and to begin placing our roots.

Roberta C. Baker  
Yarmouthport, Mass.

To The Editor:

Congratulations and good luck to you and the new way to look at and enjoy the Oxford Hills area.

Bee Baxter (Meyer)  
Miami, Florida

To The Editor:

I would like to subscribe to your magazine as I found the November issue very enjoyable.

As organic farmers, my husband and I especially appreciate your concern for those attempting varying degrees of self-sufficiency, and for those who wish to preserve the beauty and rustic character of the state. I'm sure you will be receiving overwhelming responses in the form of letters, articles, stories and poems.

Best wishes.

Shirley J. M. Hatch  
Denmark, Maine

To The Editor:

Just read your marvelous article in the November issue of the magazine featuring the Norway chapter of our Society.

After all the thousands of words that have been written about our Society and our chapters over the years, I honestly feel that yours is one of the best we have seen. Evidently you did a great deal of research and managed to bring out of each of the members the real feeling they have for Barbershopping and the Society in general.

Thanks again for giving our Society and Barbershopping in general such an excellent coverage.

CHORD-ially,  
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## Season's Greetings



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Cont. from page 13

City Line Avenue, Villanova, or Mount Vernon Street in Boston. It's not the same everywhere. But when you have an isolated, special, proud, independent people, then you're going to have the same kind of thing. You have the put-down of the foreigner. The summer complaint in Maine is akin to the non-Texan or the "non" something else. I can't imagine there could ever be a California humor. They don't have pride and Independence and so on. No one came from California.

*We've talked a lot about Bert and I. Do you have any germs of ideas for which you have any particular fondness?*

Well, it's not an idea, as such, but I like the element of paradox which often turns up in what is euphemistically called Maine Humor. I'm making it ironic, I guess. The story of the fella who... This story has been told in a number of ways. I always tell it about Roy Buck up at Milton Plantation. It doesn't matter where. But it's a story of a guy who is out haying with his father on a hot summer day and the father is taken ill and taken back to the house. The son keeps on finishing the haying, and gets back to the house and his mother is nowhere around and his father is nowhere around, but auntie's in the kitchen and she says she has bad news for him, that his father has died. His response is, "Where's my grub?" Auntie is distraught and distressed and mother is in the other room, weeping. Father's laid out in the parlor and Roy just sits and wolfs down this enormous meal. Auntie finally comes in and says, "Don't you know what I told you?" And he says, "Auntie, if you'll just wait 'til I finish my dinner, you'll hear some of the god-damnedest crying you ever heard in your life."

That's paradoxical, isn't it? But, you know, that's the ending of Frost's poem, "Out, Out" — one of the most moving poems about facing death there is. He turns it in another direction, but it's the same thing. You laugh at Roy's remark, but you don't laugh at the end of the Frost poem. But, it's the same thing. Because they had nothing else to do, they went about their work. That's really what Roy is saying. But he's saying it in a way that makes it into a punch line.

And, of course, Roy never said that and

... cont. page 39

Cont. from page 38

that was never true. Those are made up. Made to sound authentic. But the point is that the wisdom of the thing is in the recognition of the fact that when death occurs, the only response is a little bit of crying and then a hell of a lot of hard work to carry on.

*Is there such a thing as Yankee wit and wisdom?*

There's no such thing as Yankee wit and wisdom. That's nonsense. They've just said things in words that are different enough, that people think they're wise.

*But there is a real chauvinism about being a native Mainer?*

You're damn right. Sure there is. And I love it.

*It really makes a difference — being a native?*

It really makes a difference. Those of us who got here had to make an effort to migrate toward the east. It was very easy to move west. I don't know. I have no idea why it is important, but it is.

*Is your wife from Maine as well?*

She's from New Hampshire. Close. But not quite the same.

*The special feelings you have about Maine, are they as true for your kids and your kids' kids?*

I don't know whether my children will feel the same way. To a degree they will and I say that because, by choice, my daughter and her husband have made the decision to stay in Maine and my son and his wife have made the decision to stay in Maine. Both are in businesses which might well have taken them to a lot of places. I would have been disappointed to have them leave, not only from the point of view of distance, but because I think they're good Yankees.

*Good Yankees don't move out of Maine?*

They may have to leave for awhile. I had to go west to college. I went to Amherst. That's pretty far west. I made the decision that Bowdoin was too close to home. I wanted to get a way off. I wouldn't cross the Hudson, but I'd go as far as Amherst. After college I taught in Massachusetts for four years. Then I came to Hebron.

*You don't feel out of touch here at Hebron? Where do you meet Maine Yankees?*

I meet them every day. Not on the staff, that's true. But I go to South Paris every day in order to get out of Hebron. And, I was one

... cont. page 42

The



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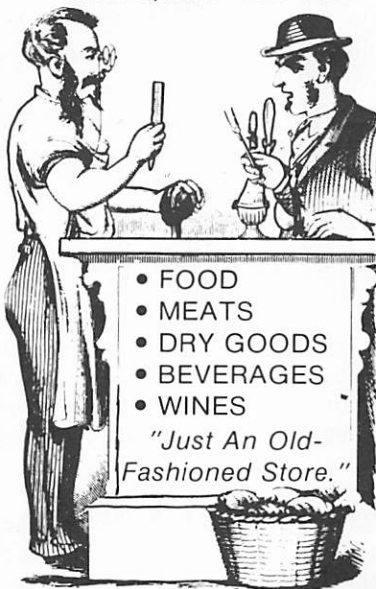
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# Goings On

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**CANDLELIGHT CHORALIERS** Christmas Concert: Dec. 18, 5:30 p.m., First Congregational Church, South Paris. Admission Free, Donations Accepted.

**ARTS CONTEST:** Sponsored by U. S. Office of Education as part of American Education week; seeks stories, poetry and art work by students, grades 1-12. Entries should be sent to P. O. Box 1340, Main Post Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20013. Winners will be published in a spring issue of the gov't. magazine: *American Education*.

**LIVING NATIVITY SCENE:** The Bethel Common, Sun. Dec. 18, 4:30 p.m.; 5:30 p.m., two half-hour performances.

**TELSTAR'S CHRISTMAS BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT:** Dec. 28-29; Telstar Regional High School.

## THEATRE

**CHILDREN'S THEATRE:** Repertory Production by the Oxford Hills High School Drama Club, Dec. 3, 10, 17, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m., High School Auditorium, Admission 25¢.

**NORTH CONWAY PLAYERS:** in Samuel Becket's *Waiting For Godot* at Hebron Academy, Dec. 4, Sargent Gymnasium.

## MUSIC

**BROADWAY CELEBRATION COMPANY:** Sponsored by Oxford Hills Music Boosters, Sat. Dec. 3, 8:00 p.m., Oxford Hills High School Cafeteria

**LAKE REGION JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT:** Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m., Lake Region High School, Bridgton.

**LAKE REGION HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT:** Dec. 20, 7 - 10 p.m., High School Auditorium.

**OXFORD HILLS HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT:** Dec. 15, 8 p.m. High School Auditorium.

**TELSTAR REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT:** Dec. 22, 7:00 p.m., High School Auditorium.

**C. & W. MOW CO.** live at The Magic Lantern, Bridgton, Dec. 27, 8:00 p.m. Tickets \$3.00. For reservations, tel. 647-5033.

## ART

**CONEY ISLAND SHOW: PHOTOGRAPHS** by BRUCE GILDEN at Hupper Gallery, Hebron Academy, through Weds. Dec. 14. Gallery Hrs: Wkdays 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Sundays 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

## SPORTS

**O.H.H.S. BASKETBALL** (Boys' JV & Varsity) Home Games: Dec. 13, 6:15, Morse;

Dec. 21, 5:30, Noble; Dec. 23, 6:15, Brunswick.

TELSTAR BASKETBALL (Boys' JV & Varsity) Home Games: Dec. 6, Messalonskee; Dec. 13, Jay; Dec. 16, Livermore; Dec. 20, Hall-Dale.

BUCKFIELD BASKETBALL (Boys' Varsity) Home Games: Dec. 2, Waynflete; Dec. 6, Christan Academy; Dec. 9, Fryeburg Academy; Dec. 17, Valley.

## SALES

CHRISTMAS FAIR & TEA: West Parish Congregational Church, Bethel, Sat. Dec. 3, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FAIR: First Congregational Church, South Paris, Sat. Dec. 3, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS FAIR: Oxford Ward Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Skeetfield Rd., Oxford, Sat. Dec. 3, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

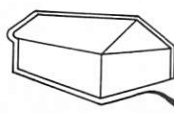
CRAFTS & FOOD SALE: Sponsored by Otisfield Baptist Church at Otisfield's Community Hall, Sat., Dec. 3, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR: Sponsored by the Hospital Guild of Northern Cumberland Memorial Hospital, Bridgton, Sat., Dec. 10.

SKI & WINTER SPORTS SALE: Sponsored by Mechanic Falls Recreation Dept. to benefit the town hockey rink & children's sports, Sat. Dec. 10, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Municipal Building; Equipment donations welcome or sale on commission basis. Also home crafts table. For information, contact Pat Maberry (tel. 345-9801)

ETC.

THREE-PART SERIES ON THE MARTIAL ARTS: Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 13 & 20 at 10:00 p.m., The Magic Lantern, Bridgton. Films & demonstration by Bill Dymond. Admission \$1.50 per session.



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Cont. from page 39

of the early founders of the fire department and served on the local school board here and while the local union was forming. I was on the board of Stephens Memorial Hospital for 17 years. I never did join the local church but I've attended almost every Sunday for 30 years. Don't say I've not been a part of the community.

That's one of the nice things about this tiny town, this special community that is Hebron Academy. Particularly when I was in the fire department, on the school and hospital boards all at the same time, I knew everybody. I still do.

One of the reasons I go to Paris is that I can go in every store in town and know somebody. I'm fortunate, too, having been here for so long, to know all the real old Yankees of South Paris who are now retired and so on.

*Are there new Yankees coming along to take their place?*

Sure. There are still some people coming along who are willing to dicker.

*You have some ways of defining a Maine Yankee. That's one of them, willing to dicker?*

I guess you'd say *eager* rather than willing to dicker. Expecting, you know, the whole Arabian thing which is part of the fun of life.

*Are there other universals?*

Well, I hope so, one of which is a sense of humor, mostly kindly humor. Nothing is sacred. The Maine person of Roy Buck's sort has an enormous capacity for seeing the phony, for cutting through and simply coming out with the terseness which may really be paradox in the long run. He may run on at the mouth like everybody else in the world. Maine people are not necessarily laconic. But, they also have the great capacity to listen: I mean to hear and listen and then to find the essence.

*Tolerant?*

Not a bit tolerant of people different from themselves if that difference is in terms of the phony.

*Do you pick things up in South Paris — a story or something you might jot down for use on a Bert and I record?*

I never jot it down. When you do that you've lost it. Maybe, if I send Bob a letter, I'd get the germ of the idea. You never give the

... cont. page 43



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... cont. page 44

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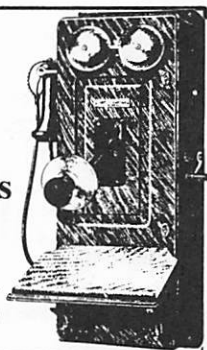
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Cont. from page 43

great because the difference in life isn't as great. Grandmother lives the way son and daughter live.

*Then the response to the record is a natural interest in something in Maine that is representative of the past?*

Yes, and something that is couched in terms that make it seem unique. But, I don't really think it is. There are special qualities about it. Certainly the sound of it and the terrain. We don't have stories about plains and cowboys. Nor do we have stories about Chicanos or Mexican Americans. But the adaptability is universal.

But those people now come looking for the country and so people are building country inns. What the hell is building a country inn? It's either there or it isn't there. They're capitalizing, if you will, on all that, the tourist trade. And then the New Yorker moves up here and builds a country inn. That's even more ludicrous. How can you?

*But, they're doing that because they want to lead the country life. They're here in a sense because they want to try to live the way people here have always been living.*

No way. You can't do it possibly. You can fake it and you may do a pretty good job at it. A lot of them do. Maybe your grandchildren will live Maine life as you lived the Maine life. But, you're never going to live the life the way grandchildren of Maine people are living the life now. I have nothing against people coming into Maine and so on. I don't fight it. But I am opposed to the phoniness of those who think they are really living Maine when there's no way it can be — through no fault of theirs — no matter how hard they try.

*Is the humor going to stay?*

God, I hope so. We lose our humor, we haven't got anything left. It's always been. We have always made fun of everything, including death and taxes. In spite of all the nonsense, I think Maine will survive a heck of a lot longer as a last outpost than people think.

*Do you think Bert and I records will still be going strong in the year 2000 or twenty-hundred?*

I hope not. They'd be outdated. Then they'd be nostalgia.

*You don't think they're nostalgia already?*

Maybe for some. Not for me. It's the way I've always been.



# You Don't Say

—by Flora Abbott

The late Mrs. Abbott, a life-long resident of Waterford, was a columnist for the **Advertiser-Democrat** during the 1940's and 50's.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all is the wish of "Just One of the Folks"! As for me, I am entirely in favor of the spirit of what has become to be my favorite song this Christmas to "Put Christ Back Into Christmas!" I think that would be of more importance than filling stockings to bursting and the Christmas tree until it overflowed onto the floor with things, that in this day only seem to last for a week or so. That they are, for the most part, only sloppily built and only meant to last that long, probably in the interests of good business, I freely admit... in the heyday of my youth they were built strong enough so they would outlast the generation they were made for and hold out for the next generation to smash up...

For about two weeks now I have, in a manner of speaking, been dining off purple stamps, red stamps,... TB stamps and mucilage off envelope flaps and Christmas messages and cards thrown all over my dining table, while I threw everyday mail and bills into the middle of the table to leer at me while they awaited the day of reckoning. Now the day is approaching when I have to balance up my checkbook and decide which side of the ledger I am operating from, pick up the pieces and go on from there, and where, pray tell, did Christ come in on that deal?



"No woman knows everything, but she can come close to it if the town is small enough." And ain't it the truth? At the moment, I am relieved that the hunting season is over, and as far as I know our home folks came out unscathed, and so did the most of the deer. (I would think up a high sounding word like that, but unhurt sounded altogether too simple). I got quite a lot of entertainment in seeing the hunters rush by in both directions in their belief that any territory other than their own was the best hunting grounds, as those in one end of

... cont. page 46

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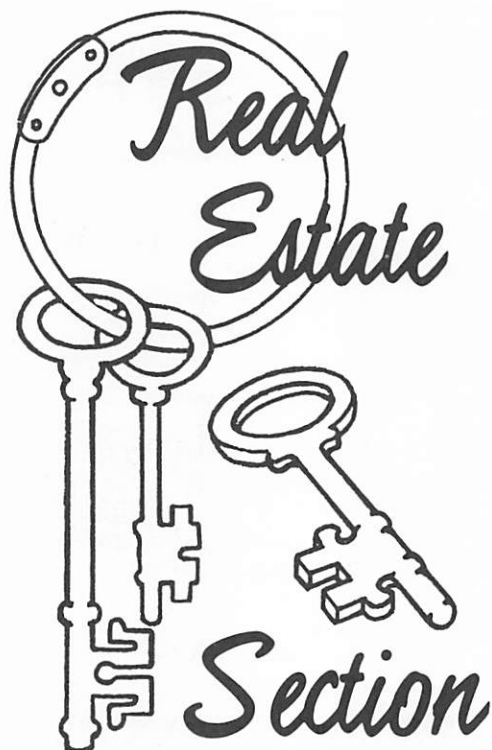
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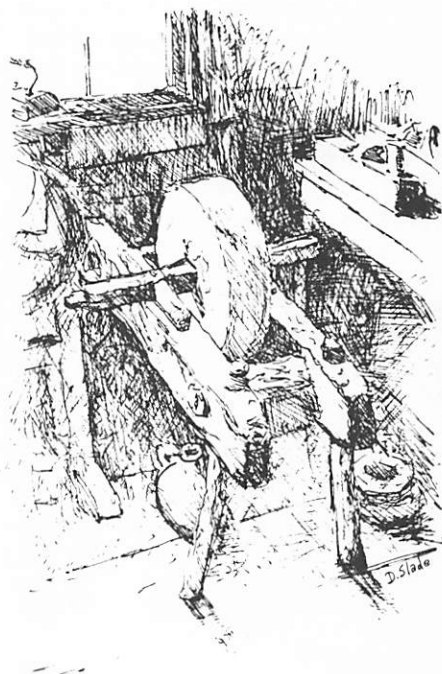
Cont. from page 45

the town switched over to the other end, passing on the way those from that territory going to theirs. Well, anyway, it made for a change of scene.

I used to resent the hunting season, because it was just the time when I liked to take to the woods and mountains, when it was cool enough so you really enjoyed walking, but with so many happy hunters abroad I didn't even dare walk on my own land, much less that of anyone else.

I remember one fall, not long ago, going up the lane in the Stanwood pasture on my way to going across from Stanwood Mountain to Mount Tir'em and when well on my way, I happened to think, "My Gosh! It's the hunting season, in the path of possible bullets, and no one on earth knows where I am!" For once I used what few brains I possessed and retraced my steps. Of course I didn't look much like a deer but I was a moving target and that is all it takes. I never did get across there, because in the summer Charles Nelson had a bull in the pasture, and you might say I was caught between the bull and the bullets.

\*



# Heading Out

We should have realized when we noticed one of the *chefs* depositing cherry tomatoes at the salad bar that we'd chosen the wrong night to drop in at South Paris' **Positively Maine Street**. Come to find out, we were part of what manager Jim Carey described as a hazard of the trade. Almost twice as many people as usual had shown up for dinner that particular Friday night and the staff was short-handed and harried as a result.

But, it couldn't have happened at a nicer place. Although the service was painfully (but understandably) slow, the pleasant, relaxed surroundings made the wait almost enjoyable. Lush greenery highlights handsome, heavy trestle tables; chairs are comfortable for a change, and the cafeteria ambiance, for which Norway-South Paris has in the past been noted, was entirely missing. It all adds up to a nice change of pace, until now available only by either driving into the city or splurging at Maurice's.

Carey, who managed Hazel Green's in Augusta before heading here, says the place aims to introduce a bit of the urban influence into this area. Happy hours have been scheduled daily from 3-7 p.m. in an intimate lounge area which seats about 80. Crackers and cheese are available and cribbage boards are on hand. Bands appear in the lounge on weekends. Sandwiches are served there, although that's something which isn't pushed.

What is stressed, instead, are middle-priced meals from a menu which is limited but varied, ranging from veal parmesan to chicken cordon bleu. Baked scallops and prime ribs of beef are house specialties. All entrees are served with either potato or a

... cont. page 50

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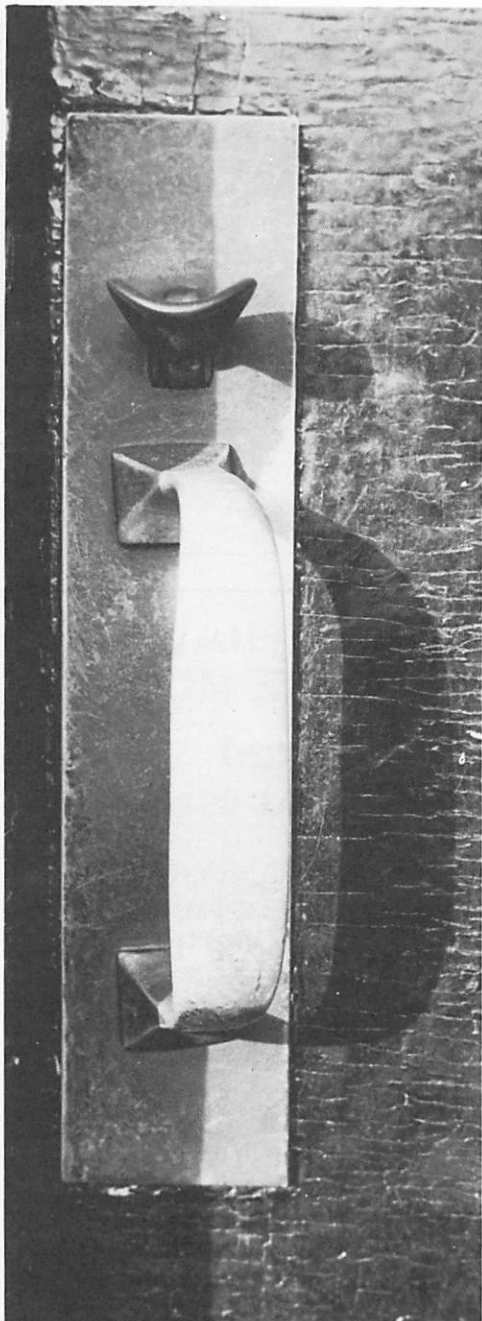
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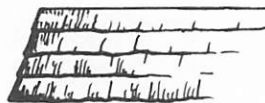
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Cont. from page 47

tasty rice pilaf and an extensive salad bar which includes spinach, bean sprouts and chick peas on occasion. Pies and sherbet desserts take a back seat to the house cheesecake, which is delicious.

Because the place has found itself frequented by a regular repeat luncheon trade, daily specials are offered at \$2.95, including meat loaf, spaghetti, spare ribs and beef burgundy. But, we're particularly fond of the soup and salad bar selection at \$2.25, which gives the choice of either onion soup or fish chowder and all the salad you can eat.

Although the place has only been open since this fall, an addition is already being added off the lounge to serve as a function room for large group gatherings. Seating 50, it should be available for use by the middle of this month. That strikes us as a good omen.



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# Poetry

## MOTION

I am the man walking  
into town:

I am progressing very slowly  
or perhaps not at all.  
It could be the town that is moving  
behind me like a backdrop.

It is a small town  
that doesn't dwarf  
a small man;  
that revolves through the years  
as if painted on a drum  
so that I can be  
that man walking into town  
again.

—John Garnham

## A GLINT FROM HIS WATCH

He drove home  
his usual route  
paying little attention  
to the way  
until a glint  
from the man  
preparing to jump  
high above him  
caught his eye.  
"It must have been the sun on his watch," he  
thought  
as he continued home,  
unconscious of the marriage of air  
and death behind him.

—John Garnham

## CUP OF TEA

Love,  
like the comforting warmth  
of a cup of tea  
within me  
on a frozen  
day's night,  
feels not  
of its presence  
but of its past.  
And the memory  
lingers  
to be savored  
until  
the next cup  
refreshes my memory  
and warms my soul.

—Brian Dreher

*Dreher is a tinker living in West Sumner.*



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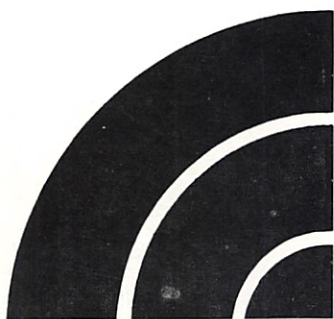
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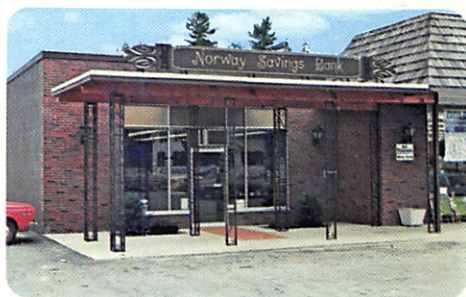
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